

Eleventh Sunday – Ord Time – B

I love trying to solve riddles ...Here's one that only 1 in 6 college grads could figure out (not me) ...Now, if you've heard this one before, you're not allowed to answer... Ok...*"What is stronger than God, more evil than Satan, poor people have it, rich people need it, and if you eat it you'll die?"*...The answer: "NOTHING"...Nothing is stronger than G...Nothing is more evil than Satan. ...Poor people have Nothing...Rich people need Nothing...and if you eat Nothing, you will die.

A parable is a lot like a riddle because a parable has a meaning that is not immediately clear ...A parable is a story that is supposed to make us stop and think in order to figure out what the story means...The Gospels have Jesus telling over 40 parables to teach His disciples - and hopefully all of us – about things He wants us to know....Jesus used stories filled with everyday images people were familiar with to teach about God and about God's ways and about God's desire to have all of us with Him forever...

One of the major themes of Jesus' preaching was the Kingdom of God...He began many of His parables – like the two in today's Gospel – with these words: "The Kingdom of God is like..." and then He went on to tell a story to illustrate some characteristic of the Kingdom of God. ...Now, before we look at today's parables, it's important to clarify what Jesus refers to when He speaks about the Kingdom of God...Many people think He's referring to what happens to us after we die...They think of the Kingdom of God only as some geographical area, some heavenly paradise we go to if we have lived a life of faith in Jesus Christ...But this isn't what Jesus means when He speaks about the Kingdom of G...Sure, He is talking about the glorious, new life we hope to go to when we die,...but He's also talking about life right here, right now...

Jesus taught us to pray "thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."...We pray for God's kingdom to be present here on earth...You see, the Kingdom of God really means the reign of God, the rule of God,...The Kingdom of God is here when we allow God to rule our hearts,...rule our lives...The Kingdom of God is present when we resist Satan's temptations and let God rule over everything we do, every decision we make,... The Kingdom of God is present when we do the will of God as His Son taught us and as His Son showed us by how He lived His life..."Thy will be done..."

The 1st words Jesus preached when He began His ministry were "Repent, the Kingdom of God is at hand."...The Kingdom of God is at hand...It's here, but not yet FULLY here...The Kingdom of God was launched when God sent His Son to teach us and show us Kingdom living,..but it will only come to fullness when Christ returns, ...when sin and evil and Satan are destroyed, and God's complete rule on Earth is established and all of creation will be under the loving reign of God...The Kingdom of God...is here, but not yet fully here.

In the two parables in our Gospel, Jesus uses the familiar images of seeds and planting and growing to help His listeners understand something important about the Kingdom of God.... Ok, so what is Jesus saying with these two parables?...Well, truth be told, I'm not sure what Jesus is saying. ...But I do have a hunch...Could it be that the people gathered around Jesus were feeling a lot like you and I feel at times?...They couldn't see God at work in the world and in their lives...All they could see was greed and poverty, war and violence, hatred and distrust.All they could feel was the misery of illness and disease, and the pain of broken relationships

and betrayed promises...They needed assurance that God was in control; ...They needed to know that God was active in their life,...because they just couldn't see it...Maybe they had come to Jesus hungry for a word of hope...

So Jesus tells them that the Kingdom of God is like when a farmer tosses seed on the ground and even though he can't see it and he doesn't know how it happens, the seed grows...Maybe what Jesus was telling them was, "The Kingdom of God, the rule of God, the activity of God in the world and in your life...is here and it's growing even though you can't see it and don't know how it's happening...Then He tells them that not only is the Kingdom of God growing, it's growing like a mustard plant grows - like a weed...Now, the people back then would've understood this, because it was against Jewish law to plant mustard seed in a garden because it grows and grows and takes over the garden... **You gardeners know how weeds are. You can't kill them. They always find their way back...**and that's what the Kingdom of God is like, Jesus says...you can't stop it. You can't kill it...You can try, but God will never stop trying to become the ruler of your life, the ruler of your heart.

This is what God wants...to be the ruler of every heart of every man, woman and child in the world. This is the Kingdom God envisioned, when He created the world...when He created us...We have to believe God's dream will come true,...and as people of faith, it should be our dream too....I believe it was Martin Luther King's dream... Here's part of his dream that he described so powerfully: *"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and lie out the true meaning of its creed: that all men are created equal....I have a dream that one day the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood....I have a dream that my 4 little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character....I have a dream that one day, down there in Alabama, little black boys and girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and girls as sisters and brothers."*

MLK's dream sure sounds like what God had in mind originally,...All of God's children hand in hand. ...The Kingdom of God... where God's ideals – revealed to us by His Son – are the foundation by which all people live...A place where all people live as equals...A place where no group is oppressed, ...where not one group is starving while another group grows fat...A place where newspapers aren't filled with killings on the streets of our cities... A place where there is no war, no terrorism...only peace...The Kingdom of God is where we truly love our neighbors as we love ourselves, and our neighbor is everyone...That, my friends, is the Kingdom of God that was set in motion when God sent His Son...Sadly, it is a long way from being fully realized, ...and many of us might feel it's actually going the other way.

But the words of Jesus we heard today should give us hope...He told us that the Kingdom of God is here...Like the farmer who can't see or understand how the seed grows into a plant, we may not see and understand how God is in control and active in the world and in our lives...But Jesus says He is...God will not turn His back on us...ever...And Jesus told us that the Kingdom of God is growing...like a mustard bush It can't be killed, it can't be stopped...God will not stop trying to become the ruler of every human heart...and that's where we come in.

By letting our hearts be fertile soil for the seeds of the Kingdom that God has planted there,.. we will help the Kingdom of God to grow...By letting God rule our every, thought, word and

action,..others may see the peace and the joy of living under God 's reign...We can plant the seeds of the Kingdom for others, and God will do the rest...and the Kingdom of God will grow.

I'd like to end by praying together **the 1st two lines** of the Our Father. This prayer is so familiar to us that we often pray it without thinking about what we are praying. I hope from now on that whenever we pray the Our Father., as we pray for the coming of God's Kingdom, we will envision the Kingdom of God in all its glory with all of God 's children hand in hand....So, let's pray: *Our Father who are in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done , on earth as it is in heaven. AMEN!*